



SUCCESS STORY

Better communication, more tourists

New equipment helps guides and primate trackers communicate with greater ease



Photo Credit: Daniel Lapidus

“With the new communications system funded by USAID, we can now communicate directly to people, saving time and reducing confusion”

— A ranger in
Nyungwe National Park

“Mfite Imbaraga” – “I am strong” – declares a porter from a nearby community, as he proudly carries two modern radio repeaters on his head for the two-hour trek to the summit of Mt. Bigugu, the highest peak in Nyungwe National Park at 2,950 meters. This modern communications equipment sits on top of the mountain, where it can easily send and receive signals from another repeater installed on a sister peak across the park. The system was purchased with support from USAID through its *Destination NYUNGWE* Project implemented by International Resources Group, and designed in close collaboration with the Rwandan government.

The tour guides and primate trackers in the Park have benefited enormously from this upgraded system. As one ranger put it, “Before, when we wanted to communicate with someone in the park we had to send a radio message to someone stationed at the top of the mountain, and then that person would relay the message to others, who would then relay the message back before we receive a response.” This exposed important park management messages to distortion and miscommunication. What’s more, the new system covers a much wider range. “We can talk to guides in the furthest reaches of the Park, places we could not access before.”

Of the 13 species of primates in the Park, tourists are most interested in viewing the chimpanzees and the large troops of Colobus monkeys. Both species are migratory, and trackers must follow them daily. With the new communications equipment, the rangers at the Park Reception Center can more easily communicate with the trackers to increase the likelihood of primate viewing. Also, researchers and rangers can now communicate with each other about the primate’s whereabouts or any relevant changes to its habitat.

Park authorities can now better manage the increasing influx of tourists by arranging for tourist treks, transport, and lodging, and responding to any emergencies. Nearby villages also benefit from the new technology because they can more easily arrange for community-based tourism experiences.